



REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Office of the
Representative for Children and Youth

Service Plan 2010/11 to 2012/13





REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

November 5, 2009

The Honourable Bill Barisoff
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to present the 2010/11 to 2012/13 Service Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to the Legislative Assembly.

This report covers the period April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2013 and has been prepared in accordance with part 5, section 17 of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth
Province of British Columbia

pc: Mr. E. George MacMinn, QC
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Ms. Joan McIntyre, MLA
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth



REPRESENTATIVE FOR
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REPRESENTATIVE FOR
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Message from the Representative for Children and Youth



This is the third Service Plan presented by my Office and comes at the mid-point in my five-year term as the first Representative for Children and Youth in British Columbia.

It takes everyone involved in the life of a child to ensure the best possible outcomes for that child. Primary responsibility rests with the parents, the extended family and other caregivers. The community within which the child lives and society as a whole also play a role in supporting families in the care and development of children. Children are vulnerable and need the care and support of a nurturing family. However, due to certain circumstances or conditions some children are more vulnerable than others and need extra or special supports from government.

The child- and youth-serving system in British Columbia is broad, multi-layered and complex. Government provides a range of services both directly through the Ministry of Children and Family Development and other ministries and agencies, and indirectly through child- and youth-serving organizations. Ministries and agencies provide supports to children and youth and their families to help them overcome particular circumstances or address special needs. In some instances, where a parent is unwilling, unable or incapable of caring for a child, government takes on full parental roles for children and youth.

In 2008/09 in B.C., approximately 14,500 children and youth lived outside their parental home. About 60 per cent of those were in care of government and more than half were Aboriginal children and youth. Nearly 4,400 children and youth were in the Child in the Home of a Relative program, over 600 were in youth agreements and about 190 were in kith and kin arrangements.

These children can be considered as some of the most vulnerable children and youth in B.C. Many of these children and youth face barriers and struggles throughout their young lives, and encounter situations most B.C. children would not face. They often deal with sudden and frequent moves and have limited opportunity to be heard in decisions that may have life-long effects. Society has a responsibility to ensure that our system of care for these children builds their resilience and healthy development.

My Office plays a unique and challenging role in the child- and youth-serving system. I am responsible for advocating for children and youth and helping to ensure that their rights are upheld and their voices heard in decisions affecting them. My Office is also responsible for monitoring the overall "health" of the



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child- and youth-serving system through regular reviews, audits and observations of day-to-day service delivery and for advocating for changes to improve the quality of services and supports for children and youth, particularly those most vulnerable. This includes the review and investigation of critical injuries or deaths of children receiving select government services.

Over the next period of my mandate, my Office will continue to build on the solid foundations of our advocacy program. We will continue our efforts to inform children and youth, and their families and caregivers, about the services provided by the Office. We will ensure that individual advocacy services are available and accessible for children and youth throughout the province and will work with communities and community agencies to facilitate community developed services and supports for vulnerable children, youth and their families.

I plan to make increased efforts to engage youth and hear from them directly about the issues that concern them and about what is actually working to address their needs. Engaging youth is not only a critical component of making improvements to the quality of services, but is also critical in building capacity in children and youth. Empowering youth and giving them the opportunity to speak out for themselves and others not only supports their own personal growth and development but also the development of skills that will help them grow into responsible, contributing members of society.

A number of broad themes have emerged from the work of my Office over the last few years:

- Safety and well-being of children and youth and protecting them from violence – it is a sad reality that some children and youth in B.C. experience or are exposed to violence in their young lives. Some children experience great physical harm at the hands of family members, caregivers or others. Even children exposed to violence can suffer significant destructive and harmful effects. Greater effort and attention to early intervention methods and ways to better integrate and coordinate services is needed to contribute to the prevention of critical injury or deaths of children and youth and to the reduction of their exposure to violence.
- Duty of care of the Province to vulnerable children – the authority of government to take over the care and, at times, even the guardianship of a child or youth imposes a significant duty of care for government. This guardianship responsibility requires the government, as parent, to provide the child with a caring and nurturing environment that is attentive and responsive to the child, ensures that the child is truly listened to, that their views and interests are taken into account, and that at all times the child's best interests are the paramount consideration in all actions and decisions affecting them.



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Where the government substitutes itself as parent, it must ensure that the required system of care to support the child or youth in becoming a responsible adult is in place. Greater effort is needed by government to fulfill its responsibility in achieving the highest standard of duty of care for children and youth under its guardianship.

- Equitable opportunity for all children – every child or youth in B.C. is entitled to access core services. Government has an obligation to ensure that core supports and services are available to all children and youth across the province. Providing equitable service does not mean the provision of the same or identical service, but rather compliance with, and commitment to, consistent service expectations and standards designed to produce similar outcomes. More attention and effort is needed to ensure that all children and youth in all regions of the province have equitable access to core services that are based on common service standards to ensure consistency.

These themes will provide focus to the work of my Office over the next few years.

I will also continue to pursue an active and directed review and investigation program, including undertaking investigations as directed by the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth to fulfill my mandate related to the critical injuries and deaths of children. In my latest Annual Report I raised concerns about the ability of my Office to meet its statutory obligations in this area given the current level of funding; an issue that will be addressed in the coming months.

Over the last year I have advocated that it must become a priority for government and the child-serving system to examine and quickly act on child poverty. B.C. has one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada and the current economic slowdown has exacerbated the situation with more families impacted by job loss or reduced income. The issue of widespread poverty in our province demands bi-partisan attention. Services to children, youth and their families, in times of financial downturn usually mean decreased focus and resources dedicated to addressing their needs. The potential impact of budget deficits over the next few years on services to vulnerable children and youth make it even more imperative that government recognize and plan for more seamless, family-focused services including integrated and coordinated services for housing, income assistance and to meet other social needs.

In our work to improve outcomes for children, we must be particularly mindful of the situation for Aboriginal children and youth. Just eight per cent of B.C.'s child population is Aboriginal, yet more than 52 per cent of children and youth in care are Aboriginal. In B.C., about 1 in 20 Aboriginal children are in care, while only 1 in 100 of the total B.C. child and youth population are in care. This is an astounding disparity. As I have noted before, this is a profound injustice for these children, and a major issue for British Columbia and Canada.



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Poverty, maltreatment, deprivation and social exclusion, along with inadequate family, community, personal, cultural and academic supports, leave too many too far behind. Dedicated effort is needed to make real changes to improve outcomes, eliminate the gap in well-being, and enhance resilience and strengths in Aboriginal children and youth.

There is little knowledge of what children and youth are experiencing while they are in the care of government. There is a need for better data tracking to better understand what is happening to children and youth served and whether improvements are being made. As I noted in my most recent Annual Report, as the Ministry of Children and Family Development continues to shift practice, I will continue to carefully monitor its progress in its areas of service responsibility and its plans to improve the children serving system. At all times, but even more in times characterized by less than optimal conditions and scarce resources, it is critical that resources be directed at those programs and services that are most effective. Over the next years of my mandate I plan to enhance my efforts to engage others in understanding what works to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and work and collaborate with others to implement identified opportunities for improving the child- and youth-serving system in the province.

No one government organization has responsibility for the well-being of children and youth. This underscores the need for all the partners in the child- and youth-serving system to work together to better coordinate and integrate the development and implementation of policies and services. Collaboration is necessary to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and to implement improvements to services across the entire spectrum of child and youth services.

Yours respectfully,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth



Overview of the Office

Establishment of the Representative for Children and Youth

The creation of the position of the Representative for Children and Youth was a central recommendation of the April 2006 B.C. Children and Youth Review undertaken by the Honourable Ted Hughes, QC (Hughes Review).

The Hughes Review was commissioned following the death of a child placed by an agency with relatives resulting in questions about the Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) service delivery and the child serving system. The review concluded that the ministry and system had been "buffeted by an unmanageable degree of change", including leadership change, practice change, organizational and operational change and budget cuts. The Hughes Review made a number of recommendations for reform intended to stabilize the child- and youth-serving system in the province. One of the most significant recommendations was the creation of the Representative's Office to provide independent oversight and to "push for improvements to the child welfare system" in the province. The Representative would be an Independent Officer of the Legislature who would not report to any government ministry, but report publicly to the Legislative Assembly through a Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

November 2005: The Honourable Ted Hughes is appointed to conduct an independent review of British Columbia's child protection system. More than 70 individuals with special expertise and over 300 child welfare groups contribute to the review.

April 7, 2006: The "B.C. Children and Youth Review" is submitted to the provincial government. The review includes 62 recommendations for changes to the child welfare system; the recommendations are publicly endorsed by both the B.C. Government and the Official Opposition.

May 18, 2006: The Province passes the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, establishing the Legislative Assembly's authority to appoint a new officer of the legislature as the Representative for Children and Youth.

Nov. 22, 2006: An all-party Special Committee unanimously recommends to the Legislative Assembly that Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond be appointed for a five-year term as Representative for Children and Youth.

April 1, 2007: After filling an interim role as acting Child and Youth Officer, Ms. Turpel-Lafond assumes her full responsibilities as Representative for Children and Youth.



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The creation of the Representative's Office was a response to public concerns around accountability and public reporting. An independent oversight body was necessary to ensure that the public knows what the child welfare system is accountable for - what it does and how it does it. The Representative would be mandated to advocate for individual children, youth and their families, monitor the child welfare system and advocate for system changes, and review child critical injuries and deaths.

The Representative

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C.'s first Representative for Children and Youth, appointed on Dec. 4, 2006, is a judge on leave from the Saskatchewan Provincial Court. Her work as a criminal law judge in youth and adult courts led her to help develop partnerships to better serve the needs of young people in the justice system.

She was a tenured professor of law at Dalhousie University Faculty of Law, and taught law at the University of Toronto, the University of Notre Dame and other universities. She holds a doctorate of law from Harvard Law School, a master's degree in international law from Cambridge University and a law degree from Osgoode Hall. She is a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan.





Representative's Mandate

Representative for Children and Youth Act, section 6, Representative's Duties

The representative is responsible for performing the following functions in accordance with this Act:

- (a) support, assist, inform and advise children and their families respecting designated services, which activities include, without limitation,
 - (i) providing information and advice to children and their families about how to effectively access designated services and how to become effective self-advocates with respect to those services,
 - (ii) advocating on behalf of a child receiving or eligible to receive a designated service, and
 - (iii) supporting, promoting in communities and commenting publicly on advocacy services for children and their families with respect to designated services;
- (b) monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of a designated service by a public body or director for the purpose of making recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of that service, and comment publicly on any of these functions;
- (c) review, investigate and report on the critical injuries and deaths of children as set out in Part 4;
- (d) perform any other prescribed functions.





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The Representative for Children and Youth has a three-fold mandate:

Advocacy – The Representative has a mandate to assist B.C. children and youth under 19 years of age who are in government care (such as foster homes, group homes or youth custody) or receiving other designated services from the Ministry of Children and Family Development or other ministries and child- and youth-serving organizations. The Representative and her staff provide information, advice and support to children and youth, and their families, who need help in dealing with designated services. This includes encouraging and supporting vulnerable children and youth to speak up for themselves and to make them aware of the availability of experienced advocates who can assist them, and advocate on their behalf. Advocacy staff work with child- and youth-serving organizations to ensure the views and opinions of children and youth are not only sought, but actually heard and taken into consideration on issues that affect them. On many occasions children and youth cannot speak for themselves. In these situations, the Office directly advocates for the young person, ensuring that the voice of the child or youth is paramount in decisions being made about them, and helping them “navigate” the complex systems of support.

The Office's advocacy team also promotes and encourages the development of community advocacy organizations through outreach, information, education and support. It engages youth directly to hear about their concerns and obtain their input on how child and youth services can be made more responsive.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research – To fulfill its oversight role, the Office of the Representative monitors the child- and youth-serving system, conducts research, reviews the effectiveness and responsiveness of services and programs, and reports publicly on its findings.

Trends or themes emerging from monitoring and research activities and advocacy work serve to identify systemic issues related to government-funded child and youth services and programs requiring further review and evaluation. The Representative reports publicly on these more broadly defined – or systemic – issues, including issuing reports making recommendations for improvements to services and programs. The Representative consults with youth, as appropriate and possible, to obtain their views on issues and input to possible solutions. In addition, the Representative monitors very closely the range of issues that emerge from her meetings, correspondence and public engagements. These are all opportunities to ‘take the temperature’ of the systems of support for vulnerable children and youth.





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Research projects undertaken by the Representative are designed to contribute to a better understanding of the issues affecting vulnerable children and youth and how outcomes can be improved. Wherever possible and feasible, the Representative collaborates with other public bodies, agencies and post-secondary institutions in conducting research activities. This ensures that the Representative benefits from the knowledge and experience of others and that a broad and integrated perspective is provided.

Designated services are government-funded services or programs for children, youth and their families including but not limited to: family support, child protection, foster care, adoption, guardianship, children and youth with disabilities, early childhood development and child care services, mental health and addiction services for children and youth, youth justice, and services for youth and young adults during their transition to adulthood.

Reviews and Investigations of Critical Injuries and Deaths – A key aspect of the Representative's mandate is the review and investigation of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth who have received reviewable services in the year prior to the occurrence of a critical injury or death. The objective of this work is to determine whether the system may have contributed in any way to the injury to or death of a child, and recommend improvements to service, practice or policy aimed at preventing future tragedies.

In addition to the opportunity for learning, the results of the Representative's investigations fulfill a critical public accountability function by providing an independent, external analysis of events, with the child at the forefront throughout. The focus on the perspective of the needs of the child or youth is central to the Representative's approach. Applying this lens informs a different kind of analysis than is typically conducted in an internal review process carried out by the ministry or other agencies.

Reviewable services are services or programs under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and the *Youth Justice Act* and include mental health and addiction services for children.



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Fulfilling Our Mandate

To be effective in meeting our mandate, the Office needs the confidence and trust of the public. Public trust and confidence in the Office is created in three ways: 1) by the legislated independence of the Representative and her Office; 2) by a child-centred focus on supporting children and youth, and 3) by the integrity and effectiveness of the Office in carrying out its duties and responsibilities. The Office also needs the trust and confidence of the child serving system to be effective in working with ministries and agencies to build understanding of required improvements to promote better outcomes for children and youth.

Independence

The independence of the Office is enshrined in the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, which provides the Representative with the independent oversight authority and the responsibility for advocating for children and youth to ensure their rights are upheld, interests considered and voices heard by child- and youth-serving agencies in issues and decisions affecting them. The Representative does not report through a government ministry. It is accountable to British Columbians, reporting to the Legislative Assembly through the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, and the appointment of the Representative was through unanimous agreement of all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Child-Centred Focus

The Representative and her staff are at all times guided by a child-centred focus – this means that the child's best interests are the paramount consideration in all actions and decisions. The guiding principles governing the work of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth are:

- Families are the best environment for raising a child
- Parents and extended family have the primary responsibility for a child
- Society has a collective responsibility for providing resources and services for children, youth and their families, in particular supports for vulnerable children and youth to ensure access to equal opportunities
- The child and youth's needs and interests, now and in the future, are the focus
- Children and youth have a right to be protected and kept safe
- Children are respected and valued as individuals in their own right, with their own interests and abilities





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- Children and youth have the right to participate and be heard in decisions affecting them
- All children and youth are entitled to an equal standard of care and protection and access to consistent, timely and responsive services and supports
- Children and youth are empowered and given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Operating Principles and Values

The effectiveness of the Office is dependent on how the Office carries out its duties and responsibilities. The values of the Representative for Children and Youth reflect our mandate and our vision to be an organization that is highly effective and valued for the role it plays in upholding the rights of vulnerable children and youth, and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families.

Staff will at all times be guided by the highest standards of ethical and professional behaviour. We are individually and collectively responsible for upholding the following values:

- *Respect* – we are respectful in all our dealings with others; we accept differing views and approaches; and in our interaction with children and youth we are accessible and easy to approach, calm, helpful and empathic.
- *Integrity* – we are honest and open; we conduct ourselves in a fair, unbiased and consistent manner; we demonstrate honesty and are trustworthy.
- *Competence* – we are knowledgeable and have the required expertise, skills and understanding to effectively perform our work; we demonstrate understanding of complex issues.
- *Critical Thinking* – we demonstrate an evidence-based approach to our work and critical thinking through actively seeking out facts and information, considering differing opinions, undertaking thorough analysis and remaining open to new information.
- *Collaboration* – we endeavour to build a greater understanding of the B.C. child- and youth-serving system and identify opportunities for improving the system among all stakeholders, including the general public, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, MCFD and other ministries and agencies.
- *Accountability* – we are clear about what we do, how we do it and how we will measure our performance.



Focus on Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal children and youth are over-represented in B.C.'s child protection system, under-represented in many systems of support and often face challenges that result in extreme vulnerabilities. Supporting and assisting Aboriginal children and youth is a particular focus of the Representative's Office.

This includes engaging with, collaborating with and establishing partnerships with Aboriginal communities to deliver outreach, advocacy and support for initiatives that improve results for Aboriginal children and youth. We will work to do this in a way that respects their unique sense of place, culture, language and community. We will also partner and work with the provincial and federal government in addressing issues related to Aboriginal children and youth receiving government services.

The Representative has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the First Nations Leadership Council and the Métis Nation of British Columbia. Under the Memorandum of Understanding, the parties are committed to exploring and discussing the current state of Aboriginal children and youth who live outside the parental home or community. Only through meaningful engagement with Aboriginal leadership across British Columbia, will there be opportunities to collect and disseminate the required data and to address systemic barriers for the benefit of vulnerable Aboriginal children and youth.

Enhanced engagement with Aboriginal children and youth, Aboriginal leadership, delegated Aboriginal agencies, and Aboriginal community networks across B.C. is another goal of the Representative over the coming years.





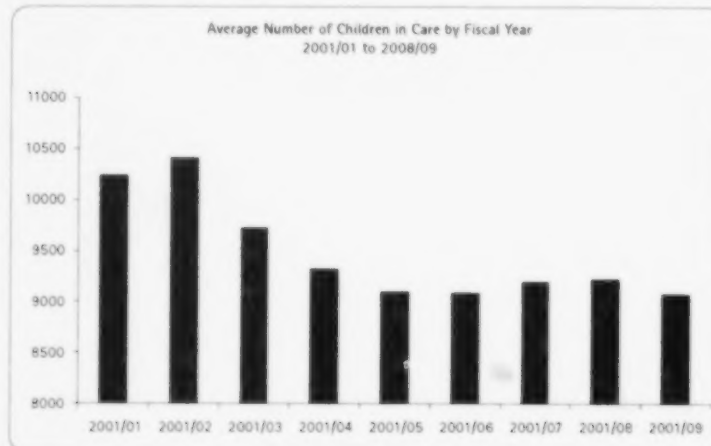
Planning Context

Current Environment

Most children and youth in British Columbia grow up in homes where they are safe, they are healthy and they experience a stable environment and circumstances that support their development. Some children and youth, however, live in an environment and experience circumstances that are not optimal to their development and that affect their safety, health and well-being. Poverty, abuse, neglect, addictions, living outside the parental home or coping with special needs can all contribute to less stability and hope for the future. Strong systems of support can, however, improve the outcomes for these children and ensure that they have equal opportunity to develop to their potential.

Challenges and Opportunities

- B.C. has a significant population of vulnerable children, with much higher rates of vulnerability for Aboriginal children. In 2008/09 approximately 14,500 children lived outside the parental home and about 60 per cent of those were in care of the government. Eight per cent of B.C.'s child and youth population is Aboriginal, but more than 52 per cent of children and youth in care are Aboriginal. The number of children and youth in care declined by 11.4 per cent over the nine-year period between 2000/01 and 2008/09. However, over this same period, the number of Aboriginal children and youth in care increased. As of September 2009, there were 8,677 children in care.





- Children and youth who are in care or receiving services from the child- and youth-serving system are more vulnerable than the general population. They are more likely to be less healthy, less educated, live in poverty, experience family violence and/or sexual and emotional abuse, have a higher incidence of special needs, behavioural issues or mental illness, and experience a higher level of incarceration and a higher rate of dependence on income assistance. These trends are compounded for Aboriginal children and youth. Aboriginal children and youth in care have poorer educational outcomes than non-Aboriginal children and youth in care¹, and are more likely to become involved with the youth justice system than non-Aboriginal youth who have been in care².
- The British Columbia population structure is changing. Over the next few years there will be a relatively slight decline in the population of children and youth, followed by a period of growth. However, contrary to this general decline, the Aboriginal youth population is increasing. Immigration is also increasing, particularly from Asian countries. Overall, the B.C. population continues to age.

Although the youth population is currently experiencing a decline, this is only a dip; the impact of this demographic cycle should not be overestimated. In particular, the implications of this decline on the child serving system should be viewed with caution, particularly given the impact of the current economic situation and possible increased demands for services in some areas. The growing Aboriginal child and youth population also has implications for the child- and youth-serving system, particularly given their vulnerability.

An increasing portion of children and youth will be new immigrants, underscoring the importance of building accessible and culturally appropriate services that effectively meet the needs of immigrant populations.

An increasing number of elderly will need to be supported by a decreasing number of young earners. Continued and growing pressure on the health care system has the potential to significantly impact the availability of funds for other social services, including services to children, youth and their families.

- Children and youth continue to be the victims of violence; some children and youth are subject to injury or even death as a result of violence and those exposed to it often suffer emotional and behavioural disturbances.

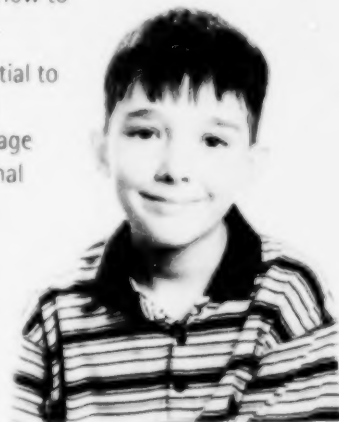
¹ *Health and Well-Being of Children in Care in British Columbia – Educational Experience and Outcomes*, Joint Special Report, Representative for Children and Youth, and Provincial Health Officer, May 2007.

² *Kids, Crime and Care: Health and Well-Being of Children in Care in British Columbia – Youth Justice Experiences and Outcomes*, Joint Special Report, Representative for Children and Youth, and Provincial Health Officer, February 2009.



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- There is an increasing demand for responsive and effective services for children and youth with special needs and their families. This is attributed to increased awareness of the rights and interests of special needs children and youth, the expanded scope of what is considered special needs, improved diagnoses and greater recognition and understanding of our responsibility to support all children in an inclusive fashion.
- Following the global economic downturn, B.C. is experiencing an economic recession. Budget deficits are expected for several years and the economic downturn has implications for services to children, youth and their families as times of slower economic growth can sometimes mean decreased focus and resources dedicated to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in society.
- Poverty is a reality in B.C. (the province ranks second-to-last as compared to other provinces in families and individuals with income below the "after tax low income cut off"³). Children, youth and their families coping with poverty are at a significant disadvantage. Beyond the obvious impacts, poverty is the most significant single factor affecting educational outcomes for children and youth. Despite this, B.C. lacks an integrated, coordinated and focused plan to address and reduce poverty in the province.
- The Representative has issued progress reports on MCFD's implementation of the Hughes Review recommendations. The overall finding from these reports is one of slow progress on real change, coupled with a surprisingly limited internal oversight capacity.
- Little is still known about outcomes achieved for children and youth in the child- and youth-serving system. There is a lack of identified outcomes and limited measurement and reporting on how well the child- and youth-service system is performing. How to improve this will be an ongoing challenge.
- Broader awareness of the rights of children is essential to establish the foundation for building resiliency and capacity in children and youth. It is essential to engage and empower youth in order to support their personal development and their growth into independent, responsible and contributing adult members of society.



³ B.C. Progress Board, December 2008.



Vision, Goals and Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

Vision

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth is an ...

Organization highly valued for championing the fundamental rights of vulnerable children and youth, and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families that result in better lives for children and youth.

Goals

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth has four main goals:

1. Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, their voices heard and considered and being active participants in decisions affecting them.
2. The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them.
3. The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse and neglect and exposure to violence.
4. The Office delivers its mandate in a child-centred, objective, open, collaborative and accountable way.





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Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

Advocacy

Goal 1 – Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, their voices heard and considered and being active participants in decisions affecting them

Objective 1.1 – British Columbians are informed of and understand the rights of children and youth, and are aware of services available to support vulnerable children and youth

Strategies

We will:

- inform and educate children and youth about the advocacy support and advice provided by our Office and how to access it, and actively promote the services available to support vulnerable children and youth;
- build public awareness and understanding of the rights of children and youth through disseminating publications, and hosting presentations and workshops in communities and with community and child and youth organizations;
- work with community partners to build understanding and engage communities in supporting and promoting the development of vulnerable children, youth and their families.

Objective 1.2 – Agencies providing child and youth services respect the rights of vulnerable children and youth, and promote children and youth in effectively participating in decisions about their life

Strategies

We will:

- work with child- and youth-serving agencies to ensure that consideration of the rights of children and youth are integrated into policies and practices, and that children and youth are active participants in the decision-making process;





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- work with government bodies and agencies who serve vulnerable children and youth to review and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of their dispute resolution processes in achieving timely and fair resolution of disagreements, and advocate for changes where appropriate.

Objective 1.3 – Children and youth have access to expanded and enhanced advocacy supports and services

Strategies

We will:

- continue to deliver expanded and enhanced advocacy supports and services to children and youth in relation to designated government-funded services and programs;
- expand our work with communities to provide outreach, training, education and other resources in support of the development of comprehensive community-based advocacy programs.

Objective 1.4 – Children and youth have access to advocacy services that are responsive to their unique cultures, beliefs, values and needs

Strategies

We will:

- consult with young people about their needs, interests and concerns, about what works in the child- and youth-serving system and engage them in identifying ways to make the services more responsive;
- continue to consult with communities, including First Nations communities and Aboriginal peoples, to identify their needs for advocacy services and collaborate with them on the design and implementation of community advocacy programs that meet their needs;
- review and consider services and programs currently available, consult with immigrant communities to identify their needs for advocacy services, and work to design and implement relevant and effective advocacy services for British Columbia's growing population of immigrant children and youth.





Measuring Performance

Key Outcomes	Measures	Targets		
		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Advocacy services are accessible and available to vulnerable children and youth throughout the province	Total # of advocacy cases per year	1700	1800	1850
Advocacy and other services support children and youth having their voices heard and interests considered	% of children and youth reporting satisfaction with advocacy and other services provided by the Office	Establish baseline	75% respondents report satisfaction with services provided by Advocacy Team	80% respondents report satisfaction with services provided by Advocacy Team

Data Collection Method: Case management reporting system; tracking and reporting number of advocacy cases where the Office provides information, advice and/or support. Targets based on trends for increasing demand for service leveling off over the three-year period of the service plan. Survey of children and youth receiving advocacy and other services as to their satisfaction with the advocacy process including accessibility and responsiveness of the services provided by the Office.

[Note – the first survey will take place during the 2010/11 fiscal year, establishing a baseline standard and confirming whether the proposed targets for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are reasonable and appropriate.]



Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

Goal 2 – The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them

Objective 2.1 – Identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for system improvement by ongoing monitoring of the quality of services to and the outcomes for vulnerable children and youth

Strategies

We will:

- develop and publish on a regular basis reports monitoring the circumstances of vulnerable children and youth in the province;
- raise public awareness of the circumstances of vulnerable children and youth;
- monitor the delivery of designated services to children, youth and their families;
- monitor the delivery of designated services to Aboriginal children and youth and their families.

Objective 2.2 – Examine the responsiveness and effectiveness of designated services for children and youth and make recommendations for improving service quality and outcomes for vulnerable children and youth by conducting research, reviews and audits

Strategies

We will:

- undertake research into emerging trends and areas of interest and concern within the child- and youth-serving system;
- undertake reviews and audits of identified designated services for children and youth and prepare public reports on the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of these services and programs;
- consult with young people on the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of child and youth services, including ways that services could be improved to enhance service quality;
- engage and collaborate with other independent Officers of the Legislature and public bodies on matters of importance for children and youth.



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Measuring Performance

Key Outcome	Measure	Targets		
		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Identified opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of designated services, inform improvements to services, ultimately improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth	Stakeholders aware of identified opportunities for improving the quality and effectiveness and responsiveness of services, and engaged in advocating and making changes to strengthen the child- and youth-serving system	For all identified opportunities, the Representative informs stakeholders and takes all means available to engage them in working to improve service quality		

Data Collection Method: Monitoring and tracking of engagement efforts, including new engagement efforts and opportunities to break down barriers to engagement and implement effective engagement strategies adopted year to year; and acceptance and adoption of recommendations made by the Office about system improvements and the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of designated services for children and youth. Over the longer term, monitoring, tracking and analysis of the well-being outcomes for vulnerable children and youth in the province.

[Stakeholders include: British Columbians; the Legislature; the Standing Committee on Children and Youth; government ministries and agencies; children, youth and their families; Aboriginal communities and child- and youth-serving organizations.]



Child Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigation

Goal 3 – The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse and neglect and exposure to violence

Objective 3.1 – Review and investigate the critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services to inform improvements to services and to aid in the prevention of similar injuries or deaths in the future

Strategies

We will:

- establish and maintain an effective and accountable child critical injury and child death review and investigation process to meet our statutory responsibility, including reporting publicly on investigations and on aggregate reviews identifying and analyzing recurring circumstances or trends;
- work collaboratively with other public bodies to promote an integrated and accountable systemic approach to reviewing child deaths and injuries and to learning from reviews and investigations;
- develop a network among child critical injury and death review agencies to explore opportunities for collaboration and learning;
- research and identify best practices to inform our own child critical injury and death review and investigation process and to provide advice to other public bodies;
- chair quarterly meetings of the Children's Forum (includes the Chief Coroner, the Ombudsman, the Public Guardian and Trustee, the Provincial Health Officer, and senior leaders from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Representative's office) to collaborate on issues relating to critical injuries and deaths of children in British Columbia.



Measuring Performance

Key Outcome	Measure	Targets		
		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Recommendations from reviews and investigations inform improvements to services that aid in the prevention of similar injuries or deaths in the future	Stakeholders aware of recommendations to improve services and are engaged in advocating and making changes that are intended over time to contribute to the reduction of child critical injury and deaths	For all recommendations made, the Representative informs stakeholders and takes all means available to engage them in working to make improvements to reviewable services		

Data Collection Method: Monitoring and tracking of engagement efforts, including new engagement efforts and opportunities to break down barriers to engagement and implement effective engagement strategies adopted year to year; and acceptance and adoption of recommendations made by the Office about improvements to reviewable services. Case management reporting system of child critical injuries and deaths.

[Stakeholders include: British Columbians; the Legislature; the Standing Committee on Children and Youth; government ministries and agencies; children, youth and their families; Aboriginal communities and child- and youth-serving organizations.]



Organizational Effectiveness

Goal 4 – The Office delivers its mandate in a child-centred, open, collaborative, accountable and responsive way

Objective 4.1 – A diverse, competent and professional staff

Strategies

We will:

- establish and maintain effective hiring policies and practices and a recruitment and succession strategy to ensure that staff are representative of the diversity of the population served by the Office;
- undertake annual employee performance reviews and ensure that staff have sufficient knowledge and resources and are supported through training and professional development;
- promote employee engagement and productivity through ensuring safe workplaces and supporting health and well-being initiatives.

Objective 4.2 – Effective infrastructure, operations, policies, programs and practices to fulfill the mandate of the Office

Strategies

We will:

- maintain a strong presence throughout British Columbia to ensure access to our services;
- build and maintain public awareness – in particular with children and youth, their families, government ministries and relevant public bodies – about who we are, what we do, how we do, it and how our services can be accessed;
- host, participate in and support conferences, forums and other events that address issues relating to vulnerable children and youth, that explore key issues and emerging opportunities to serve children and youth more effectively and to share information and best practices;
- to ensure accountability to the legislature and the people of British Columbia, review the delivery of programs to ensure their effectiveness beginning in 2010/11 with a review of the Advocacy program, followed in 2011/12 with reviews of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research program and Child Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigation program;



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- develop, implement and maintain policies, procedures, practices and protocols that reflect our child-centred approach and our values of openness, transparency, accountability, fairness and collaboration.

Measuring Performance

Key Outcome	Measure	Targets		
		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
The Office is effective in achieving its mandate	Effectiveness reviews/ program evaluations of: Advocacy; Monitoring, Evaluation and Research; and of Child Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigation programs	Undertake program review/ evaluation of Advocacy program and implement recommendations	Undertake program review/evaluation of: Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigations and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research programs; implement recommendations	



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Summary – Vision, Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures

Vision – Organization highly valued for championing the fundamental rights of vulnerable children and youth, and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families that result in better lives for children and youth		
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures
Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, their voices heard and considered and being active participants in decisions affecting them	British Columbians are informed of and understand the rights of children and youth, and are aware of services available to support vulnerable children and youth Agencies providing child and youth services respect the rights of vulnerable children and youth, and promote children and youth in effectively participating in decisions about their life Children and youth have access to expanded and enhanced advocacy supports and services Children and youth have access to advocacy services that are responsive to their unique cultures, beliefs, values and needs	Total # of advocacy cases per year % of children and youth reporting satisfaction with advocacy and other services provided by the Office
The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them	Identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for system improvement by ongoing monitoring of the quality of services to and the outcomes for vulnerable children and youth Examine the responsiveness and effectiveness of designated services for children and youth and make recommendations for improving service quality and outcomes for vulnerable children and youth by conducting research, reviews and audits	Stakeholders aware of identified opportunities for improving the quality and effectiveness and responsiveness of services, and engaged in advocating and making changes to strengthen the child- and youth-serving system
The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse and neglect and exposure to violence	Review and investigate the critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services to inform improvements to services and to aid in the prevention of similar injuries or deaths in the future	For all recommendations made, the Representative informs stakeholders and takes all means available to engage them in working to make improvements to reviewable services
The Office delivers its mandate in a child-centred, open, collaborative, accountable and responsive way	A diverse, competent and professional staff Effective infrastructure, operations, policies, programs and practices to fulfill the mandate of the Office	Undertake program review/evaluation and implement recommendations: 2010/11 – Advocacy, 2011/12 – Critical Injury and Death Reviews and Investigations and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research



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Organizational Structure





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